

TESTIMONY FOR SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Opposition to House Bill 4496
February 1, 2012

Good afternoon, My name is Stephanie Waters, and I am currently in my senior year as a nursing student at Siena Heights University in Adrian, Michigan. I am here today representing the students of the BSN program at Siena Heights some of whom you met last week at the committee hearing on January 25, 2012. My classmates and I believe it is important to express our concern and opposition to House bill 4496. In particular, we are concerned with the addition of the baccalaureate in nursing degree option.

I would first like to begin by thanking Chairman Pavlov and members of the Senate Education committee for allowing me this opportunity to testify and share my own personal experience in nursing education.

I first attended Jackson Community College in pursuit of earning a degree in nursing. Although I completed all course work and met all academic requirements, I was denied entrance into the program. My GPA was 3.46. My story is not unique- Approximately 30-52% of students are admitted in any application period to nursing programs. The community college nursing programs have limited entrance capabilities and are oversaturated with students, leaving little to no alternatives once the applicant has been denied acceptance. A significant point that stands out to me : community college students apply for and receive a substantial amount of federal assistance monies or grants to complete their education. If denied acceptance into the nursing program after completing all requirements, students are left with no degree and limited options. Some students will have well over 100 credits at a community college with no degree.

In my experience, my community college did not have the academic staff to guide students through their educational endeavors. From the point of admission, to registration, to the end of my community college education and transfer, I was a number. Many students begin their educational journey at a community college, believing that they can ultimately transfer their credits, only to find that these goals cannot be achieved due to lack of accreditation. My only option when I was not admitted to the nursing major at Jackson Community College was to try to transfer to a higher education institution.

Because Siena Heights has created strong collaborations with multiple community colleges, I was able to transfer 92 of my credits toward my Bachelor's degree in nursing. After successfully completing

required nursing pre-requisites, I applied and was admitted to the Siena Nursing program in 2010.

Another important point that I would like to make, because I transferred to a university, I had the opportunity to pursue a minor in psychology. I am currently in the last semester of my senior year. My question is this: will this Bill increase the amount of applicants headed for a similar experience as mine?

I would like to point out from a students perspective the learning I have experienced at a four year nationally accredited baccalaureate nursing institution. BSN accreditation means a nursing student is required to demonstrate high standards in written, verbal, and electronic communication skills; to understand and create a proposed project in evidenced-based research; to demonstrate care for a population or community, particularly in a global setting; to critically analyze health policies, informatics, and ethics in health care settings; and to compare the role differences between a nurse manager vs. a nurse leader. BSN nurses are educated and encouraged to become leaders, to have an active voice in the profession, to follow policy, and become an advocate for change.

The Siena Heights University Nursing program is based on a sound foundation of Liberal Arts, which supports life-long learning as well as the importance of scholarly endeavors for extending the existing body of nursing knowledge. This foundation allows for professional advancement which is needed in the nursing profession. National, professional nursing accreditation that is required of a BSN ensures that a student meets the requirements to apply for and enroll into a graduate nursing program. All of Michigan's BSN programs are nationally accredited. Siena heights faculty-all MSN and PhD prepared nurses-have taught me that nursing is more than the skills that we perform on patients. Siena nursing students are taught to question, seek, and find answers. Our critical thinking abilities are grounded in evidenced based research and our foundation of Liberal Arts promotes creativity.

I believe any community college nursing program that offers a BSN degree should follow the same mission, vision and philosophy throughout all curricula, and not capitalize on certain programs that could potentially increase their revenues. Change can cause separation and division of structure which will not support the BSN degree. Institutions who graduate students with a BSN and do not have national nursing accreditation are not fulfilling the mission and philosophy of a quality baccalaureate education.

My story demonstrates my personal experience of not being admitted into the associate's degree of nursing program. My Siena Heights classmates and I recognize the impact that House bill 4496 could

have on future nursing education, and we stand strongly opposed to this bill. I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today and express concerns from a student's perspective.

Thank you very much